9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

AFRICAN STUDIES

[Title Page]

EDITED BY

C. M. DOKE, J. LEWIN AND M. D. W. JEFFREYS

VOLUME 8

1949

(being the continuation of *Bantu Studies*, which ended with Vol. XV, 1941)

JOHANNESBURG
WITWATERSRAND UNIVERSITY PRESS

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

[P. 180A]

AN OUTLINE OF THE RELATIONSHIP SYSTEM OF THE NYANJA AND YAO TRIBES IN SOUTH NYASALAND

AUDREY LAWSON

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT7 Yao FT7
MARAVI FR4

[P.180B]

Acknowledgements are due to many African friends who have freely given me information, and especially to Mr. Bennett Malekekebu.

Y M 101 131 M [197] THE present Bantu population of the Shiré Highlands in South Nyasaland consists of four major groups :

1. The Nyanja tribe, the country's earliest known inhabitants, whose language is closely allied to that of the Sena and Tette people on the Zambesi and the Senga on the Loangwa, but whose origin is uncertain. In 1858 Livingstone found various branches of this tribe settled throughout South Nyasaland.

Y [175] 2. The Yao tribe, numbers of whom between 1860 and 1870 were driven southwards from their home in Portuguese East Africa by the neighbouring Amakua 'Walolo. These fugitive Yao fell upon the unwarlike Nyanja, conquered and subjugated their chiefs, and finally settling among them, intermarried to a certain extent.

3. A sprinkling of Ngoni, that branch of the Zulu whose flight from Chaka, wanderings in East Africa and ultimate settlement in Nyasaland and Portuguese East Africa, are familiar history. In the Shiré Highlands Ngoni are found only in small scattered groups, for their real home is the "Angoni Highlands" of central Nyasaland.

4. Recent immigrants from various tribes in Moçambique, given by Nyanja and Yao the indiscriminate name of "Lomwe", (i.e., possibly, "people from Lomwe Hill") or more rudely, "Nguru", (i.e. "people who speak indistinctly, like drunkards").

Y M [174] [131] 101 This study was made in the district around Zomba and deals exclusively with the Nyanja and Yao tribes, who there predominate

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT7 Yao FT7
MARAVI FR4

[P. 180C]

and Yao tribes, who there predominate. These peoples seem to have come from different parts of the continent. Their languages, despite a common Bantu descent and much recent borrowing, remain as distinct as possible and are obviously not modern dialects of one more primitive tongue ; their original social structures must, however, have been similar enough to attract them to each other, for they have so intermarried and their customs so fused, that one can now scarcely distinguish their ways of life and village organization. Indeed, while homesteads of apparently pure Nyanja and Yao still predominate, every considerable district contains members of both tribes, with some people, at least, of mixed descent ; moreover, and although one perceive a difference of character and manners, and trace it to the influence of Mohammedanism on the Yaos, one may well be unconsciously exaggerating. This account of relationship terms, (with brief reference to underlying social structure), must be taken, therefore, to cover the fusion of two once-separate tribes, and Nyanja and Yao equivalents must—unless otherwise stated—be understood as identical in meaning. In fact, Nyanja often prefer Yao terms to their own.

How far can one isolate the Nyanja-Yao social structure in order to study it ? Ngoni immigrants in this district are few, and their original patrilineal social system has largely succumbed to the customs of these earlier comers. The matrilineal system of the still more recent and numerous Lomwe immigrants is, I believe, (though my evidence is fragmentary), exerting a considerable influence on the somewhat dissimilar but also matrilineal Nyanja and Yao.

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca.1940)1949 FT7 Yao FT7
[P.181A] MARAVI FR4

M
Y
121
177

For the most profound influence comes from Europe. Modern large-scale economics engulfing primitive small-scale economics, legislation by Protectorate Government, contact with Christian Missions and with European ways of life and thought—these together are shaking Nyanja and Yao society to its foundations. Constructive elements they do, of course, contain, but rebuilding on the ruins has hardly begun. In order to understand the present with its problems and promises for the future, we must know something of the past ; the traditional Nyanja and Yao relationship system is the key to this past which I would try here to put into your hands. It is not yet too late to grasp. The greatest changes began within living memory, and where village and family life has been revolutionized, relationship terms are still untouched. Hence, if we study the more conservative members of the tribes in the light of these terms, we should be able to piece together a fairly accurate outline picture of their original society. I make no attempt here to analyse in detail their relationship system : a study of the mutual responsibilities and interdependencies inherent in it, and the changes it is now undergoing, would require many years, and its results fill a large volume. This paper may, I hope, serve as an introduction to another's study, made before it is too late.

M
611
591
582

Nyanja society differs from any modern European social group in three ways : it is matrilineal ; it is matrilocal ; by the traditional practice of bilateral cross-cousin marriage, (i.e. marriage to the daughter of one's mother's brother, or, equally, of one's father's sister) its ties of blood and affinity have become interdependent.

000

Our English society, like that of the pure Ngoni, is patrilineal, the child belonging primarily to its father's family and the son inheriting wealth, social status and sometimes political power from his father. The Nyanja child, on the other hand, belongs primarily to its mother's group ; a boy inherits social and political status from his mother's brother, and a girl from her maternal grandmother. These relatives on the mother's side arrange the children's marriages and have throughout life more authority and

M
611
602

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca.1940)1949 FT7 Yao ;
[P.181B]

influence over them than have the father and his group. If a marriage is dissolved any children which resulted from it stay with their mother at her home village : their father, whether or not responsible for breaking up the home, has no claim on them.

The relationship of blood is the basis of Nyanja village life. All members of a typical homestead, (*mbumba*), are relatives or affines, (that is, connected by marriage), and the custom of matrilocal marriage determines that a man must live at the homestead of his wife's parents, usually for life but at any rate for ten to twelve years and until he has proved himself a trustworthy son-in-law. Matrilocal marriage produces homesteads of twenty, fifty, a hundred or more huts, where the small family as we understand it—man, wife and children—is merged in the larger unit. This unit consists of a man and his wife ; their daughters and daughters' husbands ; their unmarried sons ; their daughters' daughters and sons-in-law ; their daughters' unmarried sons, and so on down the generations. Family authority is divided between the oldest woman in the homestead, who is grandmother, (*ambuye*), par excellence, and her eldest brother, (or, if he is dead, his heir, normally the eldest son of her eldest daughter). This man, the owner of the homestead, (*mwini mbumba*), is considered as the ultimate head of the family, but he takes advice from the female *ambuye*. The male head of the family, however, unless a petty chief over several homesteads, must live at his chief wife's home and so can only visit his own *mbumba*, not reside there.

To-day the ties that bind a family group are weakening and authority is shifting from the maternal uncle to the father ; young people mostly choose their own mates, and bilateral cross-cousin marriage, although not dead, is dying. The relationship terms, however, preserve a record of days uncertainly recollected by the oldest people living, when this was normally practised as the preferential marriage. Moreover, one can readily understand the value then of cross-cousin marriage between pairs of nearby villages : in a society where strangers were distrusted and interclan and intertribal warfare was rife,

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca.1940)1949 FT7 Yao
MARAVI FR4

182 people can only have felt safe in the home village
582 of either father or mother.

593 Let us now, with the help of Tables X and Y, work out in detail this relationship system, see what it means to a Nyanja to live in a matrilineal society and grow up in a village based on matrilocal marriage, where possible between cross-cousins.

To take first the girl *Abena*, offspring of a cross-cousin marriage between a man of the Milanzi, and a woman of the Mwale, clans. Abena
[411] inherits from her mother membership of the Mwale clan, is born at Mpoto village, her mother's birthplace, and is tied for life to her family (*mbumba*), which she must follow wherever it may move in search of land or to avoid hostile tribes. The first person Abena knew, **her mother,** was very close to her throughout infancy. She spent
[954] most of the day tied on to mother's back, and at
[595] night lay on her sleepig-mat. Her father, who has a second wife in a nearby vilage, was not always at home. Then one day her mother, be-
603 come pregnant again, refused her the breast,
[591] and soon Abena was taken into her **mother's**
861 **mother's** hut to sleep there with the children of her mother's five sisters. From now on her grand-mother is as important to the girl as her
[855] mother : Abena plays round Granny's door, as often as not eats from her porridge-bowl, is given a tiny hoe and taken to her maize garden to "help", and is instructed by her in correct behaviour towards all the homestead. On warm spring evenings the children listen to Granny's riddles, fables and tales of the ancestors, from which informal school they absorb much of the traditional wisdom of the tribe. When she reaches
[882] puberty, Abena will be taught by her grandmother and perhaps another old woman her new responsi-
[593] bilities and the taboos she must observe—her mother could never speak to her of sexual matters.
592 This *ambuye*, the oldest woman in the home-
602 stead, is, indeed, its female head, having inherited from her mother's mother the revered family name of "Abena" together with the supreme authority. Hers especially is the task of teaching the young children, advising the newly-married grand-daughters and their husbands, and hearing

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT7 Yao FT7 MARAV. FR4
[P.182B]

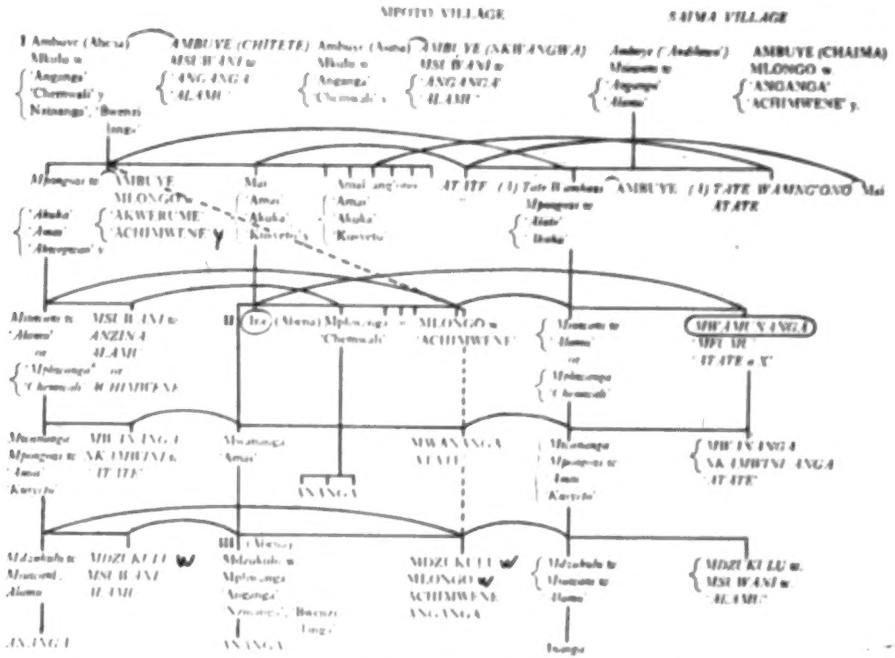
all kinds of quarrels. As she, like her daughter after her, married a cross-cousin from Saima village, her husband is a Milanzi, and although a man of character whose advice is welcomed, and called *ambuye* by Abena's generation, his voice has not the same weight as hers in deciding village affairs.

Abena the girl, then, grows up under the care of her mother's mother, who by naming her at birth claimed her as her heir and especial trust, and who singles her out from her younger brothers, sisters and cousins by the way she addresses and treats this first-born and favourite. As personal names are not normally used or referred to in conversation, Abena I speaks of, and to, Abena II as *mdzukulu*, (the name used to cover all grand-children, besides a man's nephews and nieces, and so best translated as "heir"). More commonly the old woman and the girl call each other respectively, *mkulu wanga*, (i.e. "my elder sibling of the same sex", between women "my elder sister"), and "*mphwanga*", (i.e. "my younger sibling of the same sex", between women "my little sister"). The Yao term *chemwali*, which may be exactly translated as "elder sister", is also often used, as is the familiar reciprocal term—between all grand-parents and grand-children, *anganga* ; but the special titles used between a person and his or her name-child and heir are *nzinanga*, (literally, "my namesake"), and *bwenzi langa*, ("my friend, lover").

But Abena II has other *ambuye* in the village. Her grand-mother's younger sisters and their husbands are called by this same name, and all call her *mdzukulu* and encourage her to treat them with the like friendly confidence. More familiarly, the old women and the girl may speak of each other as *mkulu wanga* and address each other as *chemwali*—Abena II would not be called *mphwanga* because she is potentially their elder sister, the future *ambuye* of the village—while the old men and the girl can speak of each other as *mwanai wanga*, (my cross-cousin), and address each other as *alamu*, (brother-or-sister-in-law). These last names I will explain later, when discussing the relationship between Abena

CROSS-COUSIN MARRIAGE

TABLE X



KEY TO TABLES X AND Y

1 Members of Mwale clan, born at Mpoto village, in roman type. Members of Mdanzi clan, born at Saima village, in italic type.

2 Capital letters signify males, small letters females.

3 A ⌒ b ⌒ c means the man 'A' has married the women 'b' and 'c'.

4 I, II, III, signify female inheritance of the title *ambuye*, that is, head-woman of the homestead, and the family name "Abena".

5 I, II, III, and dotted lines, signify male inheritance of the title *ambuye*, that is, headman of the homestead, and of the family name "Saima".

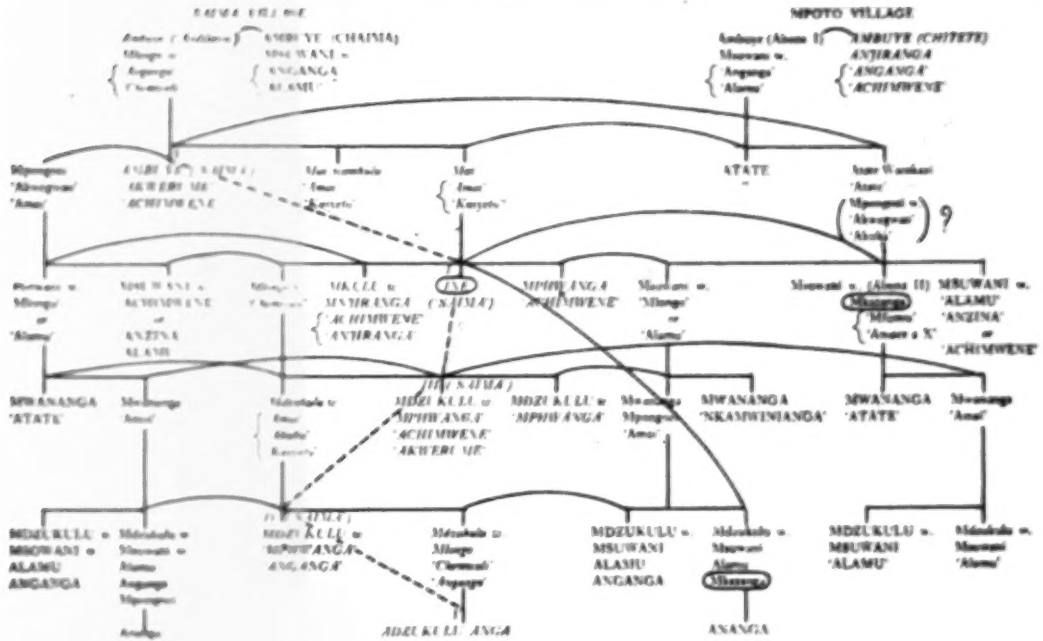
6 w = wanga (my). y = Yao as opposed to Nyanja name or title.

9: Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7
MARAVI FRY
[p.183]
M 582 MY 601

109
G62
n

CROSS-COUSIN MARRIAGE (MAN'S SIDE)

TABLE V



KEY TO TABLES X AND Y

1. Members of Mwale clan, born at Mpoto village, in roman type. Members of Mbawa clan, born at Ikoma village, in italic type.
2. Capital letters signify males, small letters females.
3. A ○ c means the man 'A' has married the women 'b' and 'c'.
4. I, II, III, signify female inheritance of the title *andeye*, that is, headwoman of the homestead, and the family name "Ahana".
5. I, II, III, and dotted lines, signify male inheritance of the title *andeye*, that is, headman of the homestead, and of the family name "Ikoma".
6. w = *wanga* (my) y = Yao as opposed to *Nyanja* name or title.

Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940) 1949 FF7 Yao [P. 184]
MBANJI FAY

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1960)1949 FT? Yao
[P.185A] MARAVI FR4

609 and her cross-cousins, for I wish now to turn to the people of her parents' generation in her home village of Mpoto.

Abena and her mother call each other sometimes *amai*, sometimes the still more respectful term *akaka* or its Yao equivalent *hanyeto*; she and her father call each other *atate* and *amai* respectively. But why is the little girl called *amai*—that is, "mother"? First, says her mother, to teach the child the name she herself wishes to be called; second, to accustom her to the polite use of titles rather than personal names; third, because she must consider her mother's heir—a child of her womb—as her potential mother! For when Abena I dies and Abena II steps into her place, she will have the status of her own mother's mother. This inheritance by alternating generations sounds paradoxical, but one must not conclude that Abena's mother scolds her when she is naughty any the less for her being the future female head of the village: their relationship is as it were a faint reflection of that between our Queen and princess Elizabeth when a child.

593 Custom does not permit Abena and her parents to call each other by the same variety of affectionately familiar names as may Abena I and her heir, for their mutual behaviour should be less free and easy. Nevertheless, both Nyanja men and women have by word and deed assured me that to the end of their lives they love and honour their mothers—their true mothers—above everyone, including wife or husband. I say love and honour, for the respect due to father and mother is brought home to boys and girls at puberty when they are taught certain taboos, (e.g. to avoid their parents' sleeping-place in the hut); moreover, care for their parents in old age is then impressed on them as their first duty in life—a duty sanctioned in pagan belief by the return of the dead in dreams to bless or curse filial or unfilial offspring.

601 Besides her own father and mother, little Abena finds in the village others of their generation—her mother's younger sisters and their husbands. All these call her their *mwana*; the women and girls address each other as *anga* or *akaka*, and the men and girl as *atate*, *amai*,

601 respectively. Here again, as with the generation above, we see how the classificatory system of relationships works out: there are no terms for "aunt" or "uncle"; all the women of Abena's mother's generation in her home village are her "mothers", all the men her "fathers", while she is "niece" to none but "daughter" to all. We
602 must not imagine, however, that children do not in their minds normally distinguish between their true and classificatory parents. Love for one's own mother is, I repeat, the deepest and most lasting affection in the life of most Nyanja. Yet surely Abena cannot feel so differently towards her true and classificatory parents as does a European child towards its parents and its maternal aunts and uncles-by-marriage: she lives next door to these aunts and uncles and knows how often a mother will hand over to a childless sister one of her own children to bring up. Indeed, I know one woman who did not discover until after her marriage that the *mai* who brought her up was not the *mai* who bore her, though I believe there was no intentional concealment.

[601] [596] Remembering that the village is coterminous with the extended family group—that both the collection of huts and of people living in them are called by the same name, **mbumba**,—let us now look at Abena among her playmates. What a contrast with children in an English village, growing up in a tension between neighbourliness and class and sectarian jealousies, and divided into little self-contained economic units of the "family"! Every child in Abena's village is **"brother"** or **"sister"** to her, and although she probably feels her real brothers and sisters especially close to her, yet she sees every bit as much of the children of her mother's younger sisters, for now as small children all eat, play and sleep together in their grandparents' hut. Abena
603 is **mbuta** or **mojira** to all the girls, ojeuka of them as **ephemanga**, and addresses each as **ephemanga** or **chemmali**; true, there are one or two actually older than her, but as daughters of her mother's younger sisters they are considered younger. Abena and the boys are **mbanga**, (sibling of opposite sex regardless of respective ages), to each

ADAMS AND THE BOYS ARE "ALWAYS" (SIBS WHO ARE OPPOSITE SEX REGARDLESS OF RESPECTIVE AGES), TO EACH

other, and address one another generally by the Yao terms of *achimwene* to a boy and *chewanali* to a girl.

Behaviour between true, and almost equally between classificatory, brothers and sisters suggests deep and lasting affection — far deeper affection than does that between man and wife. When, at or before puberty, Abena's betrothal is arranged, her eldest brother will be the go-between; later, she may turn to him, and through him to her mother's brother, for advice and help in adjusting herself to married life, and in any serious quarrels with her husband. There are no taboos between them, and if her brother is benighted near the home village on his way to his wife's home, Abena can share her supper with him and give up to him her sleeping-mat. True brothers and sisters are so close that they consider each others' husband or wife as by adoption a blood relation, calling them brother or sister. (*mphwanga*, *mpiranga* between those of the same sex, and *alongwanga* or *achimwene chewanali* between those of opposite sex). I believe this is the only instance of a term describing a relationship within the matrilineal family group being applicable also to cross-cousin affinity and even to strangers from a far village. Most informants declare that it would be unthinkable incest to marry a deceased brother's wife or sister's husband, yet not all are ready to call them brother and sister.

As the Nyanja are an agricultural rather than a pastoral people, there is no rigid division of all labour between the sexes, nor of boys and girls into age-groups; as in a modern European family, "brothers" and "sisters" play together freely in childhood, and still, though less freely, in adolescence. However, the girls of the village form a loose group with Abena at their head. Growing up together from infancy they learn from each other and through imitating the grown-ups, (*akulu*), until play develops into work, and at an early age the little girls become less of a burden than an asset to the *nkunda*. At eight or nine Abena can pound maize into flour and cook porridge with a relish of beans, carry heavy water-jars from the stream, scratch up weeds

857 in the garden with a small hoe, and carry bundles
868 on a journey—all which jobs she is expected to do
for Granny or any "mother" who needs her help.
But the companionship of her mates makes pounding an excuse for chatter and song, turns water-carrying into a bathing expedition, cooking into a game, and there is plenty of time for idleness and pure play.

601 To sum up the relationships of the **mbumba** from Abena II's point of view. She has fewer names to learn than a European child, for all members of each generation, at any rate of the same sex, stand to her in the same relationship and have the same name: all the old women and their husbands are grandparents, (*ambuyu*), all the middle-aged women mothers, (*amai*), and their husbands fathers, (*atate*), all the children brother or sister, (*alongo* between opposite sex, *apkwanga* between the girls). There are no Nyanja equivalents for "cousin", "uncle", "aunt", "great-aunt", etc.

[602] Moreover, if you push to its logical conclusion the inheritance system, you find only two generations; the third or newest in, as it were, adopted by the first, and when it grows up and bears children this fourth generation will be adopted by the second. Thus if Abena I lives to see the children of her granddaughter Abena II, (whom she has adopted into her generation with the title *apkwanga*, i.e. "little sister"), she will call these just her "children", and there is no alternative name to translate our "great grandchildren".

605 Let us now follow Abena II and her younger sister on a visit to their father's nearby village of Saima, and watch them playing with the **children of the father's sisters.** They feel quite at home here, and Abena readily accepts her paternal grandmother's invitation to sleep a few nights
[606] in her hut with these cross-cousins, *anamani*. The children at Saima are by matrilineal descent Milanzia, and so considered unrelated by blood to the little Mwale, Abena; on the contrary, the boys are her potential mates, for just as her Milanzi father married into the Mwale clan, so Abena expects to marry back into the Milanzia.
589 She has not yet been betrothed, but there is
592 talk of an engagement to her mother's eldest brother's eldest son, and the preliminaries may

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT? Yao FT?
[P. 187A]

M 584 582 be gone through soon. Betrothal, however, is a gradual process, whose culminating ceremony cannot take place until the marriage has been consummated. Ancient custom here varied, but it seems that the majority of Nyanja and Yao girls married after puberty, and to young men not very much their senior. Meanwhile, Abena calls all her boy cousins "brother-in-law", (*alamu*); she may call any one of them jokingly "my husband", (*amunanga*), and he retaliate with "my wife", (*ahanango*). There exists between them, in fact, a relationship similar to that found in many Bantu tribes and translated as "a joking relationship". The Nyanja call it *cibale cakutukana*, which means literally "relationship of rudeness, vulgar familiarity, or swearing". It permits these cousins to call each other "Thou", (*inu*), seldom heard even between brothers and sisters, to use great freedom of speech and mock insolence to one another, and to indulge in horse-play together. Just how far this familiarity went in the old days, and still goes among pagans, it is impossible to discover; children, certainly, were accustomed to build grass houses together and play at families, (*kupanga masanje*), and a Nyanja writer on the subject of Bantu marriage believes that this involved a good deal of sexual play, and not necessarily only between betrothed cousins.

Abena also calls her girl cousins *alamu* or *anzinu*, and is on very familiar terms with them; custom, indeed, seems to encourage a lack of respect between them, for Abena knows that if she does in time marry one of her boy cousins, his sisters will then feel entitled to walk into her hut and make free with her belongings, and expect her to do the same by them. Now they share with her their sleeping-mats in their grandparents' hut, together with their younger brothers. Other *anyanai* of Abena, children of her father's classifi-

Pilawoon T-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT7 Yao |
[P. 1878] MARAVI PR4

605 catory sisters, sleep in their own (i.e. biological) grandparents' huts, but join her during the day; together they form a large group of children like Abena and her "brothers" and "sisters" in Mpoto village, all calling each other *anjirangu*, or *aphwapa*, and treating their *mwanuni* or *mlamu* Abena with the extreme familiarity permitted between cross-cousins, that is, potential mates.

601 In the same way Abena learns two names for her **cousins' parents**. One, designating their actual relationship with her, the *other*, their potential affinity through marriage. First, looking on the women as her father's sisters and classificatory sisters, she describes them as her "female fathers", (*atate akazi*), and calls each *simply atate*; considering the men as her mother's brothers and classificatory brothers—which in fact they are, wherever the customary marriage has taken place—she calls them "him from whom I inherit, uncle, elder brother", (*mwbaye, akuruma achimwene*), and they describe her as their niece or grandchild, (*mdzukulu*), and call her "mother", (*amai*), or *hanyeto* in Yao. Secondly, looking upon them as her potential parents-in-law, Abena may describe them as such, (*apongozi anga*), and may address the women by the polite Yao term, *akungwao*; the men, however, she will still call *amkwye*. [1]

602 When we watch Abena and her sister with
607 their cross-cousins and paternal aunts and uncles we see clearly the difference of behaviour between *abale*, that is, blood relatives, members of the same matrilineal extended family or *mbumba*, and between members of two exogamous clans who regularly practise intermarriage. The customary behaviour between *abale*, that mixture of respect and affection which Abena has been taught at home, and which she shows almost equally to her maternal grandmother, her "parents" and her "brothers and sisters", she here uses towards

9:Lagoon X-5 (ca. 1940) 1949 X27 Tao FT7
ΠΑΡΑΝΟΙ ΕΡΥ
[P. 187 ĉ]

7
H71
G01
L14

[illegible] It is interesting here to compare the Tikopia and Tau with certain patrilineal peoples. Lowie, finding similar behavior patterns in the mother's brother and father's sister among the patrilineal Bathonga of Portuguese East Africa as among matrilineal people, warns there is a hypothetical unity characterized stage of social organization. Radcliffe-Brown, however, in his article on the Mother's Brother in S. Africa, suggests a different origin. At least two other men Evans particularized either the Polynesian Tonga and the Fiana Bhutanese—are like the Bathonga in these behaviour patterns. May this behaviour not spring directly from a tendency to extend to one's mother's and father's groups behaviour suitable to mother and father respectively.

The explanation would not, as of course Radcliffe-Brown realizes, apply to a matrilineal people like the Trobriands, where men hanker after a separated existence from one's father's clans, but is more under the authority of one's mother's brother than of one's father.

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT? Yao
[P. 188 A]
MARRUI FR4

602 her mothers' brothers, (*ambuye*), who are, of
604 course, also Mwales. But just as behaviour between the cross-cousins differs from that between *abale* so the girls behave differently towards the Milanzi women of Saima and the Mwale women of Mpoto. At Saima their respect and affection seem divorced: all the respect, mingled with something approaching fear, is given to the *atate ahazi* or *apongwai*, and all the affection, blended with a familiarity which can easily degenerate into contempt, to the *anyanai* or *alamu*.

604 The relationship between a girl and the *atate*
606 *ahazi* who is to become her actual mother-in-law, (*mpongwai*), is the most difficult and delicate in Nyanja society, and so is hedged about with restrictive taboos: the girl must not eat with her nor even speak to her, must draw well aside from the path when she approaches—often running away to hide—and must not sit on her sleeping-mat nor go anywhere near her sleeping-place. In fact, any necessary intercourse between the two must be carried on through a third person, and some girls do not even dare to speak at all in the presence of their *mpongwai*. When a girl marries into a strange *mbumba*—not her father's—she can end this *cinyazi*, ("modesty", "shame in the presence of..."), when she has proved herself a good wife by bearing her husband a child; she must, however, take her *mpongwai* a present in token that she begs permission to approach her. In some Nyanja districts, I am told, tradition forbids a girl to end this *cinyazi* as practised towards her *atate ahazi*, ("female father", i.e. father's sister), so that it becomes lifelong.

601 There is one exception at least to this last
604 custom—the first child. Abena, as the eldest child of their mother, stands in a favoured position with her *atate ahazi*: while her younger sister must avoid these aunts, she may approach them; they treat her as their *bwenzi*, ("friend", "lover"), and encourage her to confide in them and make free with their houses and belongings.

(EC) As the eldest grand-daughter in her mother's *mbumba* Abena II is name-child and heir of her mother's mother; nevertheless, her father followed the custom of asking one of his sisters to name her

9:Lawson T-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT7 Yao
[P.188 B]
MARAVI FR4

601
(553)
604
at birth, (which second name she will probably discard at puberty), and it is this custom which leads all his sisters to treat the girl as their potential name-child. Some say that the youngest child has the same freedom.

601
603
We turn finally to **Abena's paternal grandparents,** the old people in whose hut she sleeps while visiting at Saima village, and watch their mutual behaviour. At first we notice no difference from Abena's behaviour towards her maternal grandparents: here, as there, the girl often calls the old folk *ambuye* or *angunga*. But it is not long before we hear her call her father's mother *alamu*, and perhaps describe her as her *anamani*, ("sister-in-law", "cousin"), while she will call her father's father *achimene*, ("brother"), and describe him may be as her *mlongo*, ("brother" from a girl). We remember now that at Mpoto village these names were reversed: her mother's mother is Abena's *mkulu* or *mujiva*, ("elder sister") and so called *chemuali* or *anjiranga*, and her mother's father her *alamu*. How is it that Abena II can address her grand-parents as if they were members of her own generation, and how are her maternal grandmother and paternal grandfather classed together as "brother" and "sister", and similarly her maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother as "cousins"? Remember first that inheritance on the female side descends by alternate generations, that Abena II is heir to Abena I and her girl cousins to their Milanzi grandmothers—her father's various "mothers" at
(428)
(553)
(554)
Saima—and that an heir is called by the name and endowed with the status of her from whom she will ultimately inherit. Thus Abena II *is* potentially Abena I. She can call all her Mwale grand-mothers *anjiranga* ("elder sister"), and her Milanzi grand-mothers—who are in fact Abena I's *anamani—alamu* ("sisters-in-law"), and treat these old women with almost the same familiarity as the *alamu* of her own generation. Secondly,
582
591
621
602
we must remember how cross-cousin marriage works throughout the generations: Abena I as a Mwale married a cross-cousin Milanzi from Saima village; her husband built their huts at Mpoto and settled there, like several of his "brothers" with whom he forms a Milanzi

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT7 Yao
[P. 189A]

582 minority in this predominantly Mwale village;
591 his sisters meanwhile stay at Saima with their
621 Mwale husbands from Mpoto, "brothers" of
602 Abena I. Thus at Mpoto we find the women of all three generations are Mwales, called by Abena I
[601] *ambuye* or *chemwali* in the generation from whom she inherits, *amai* in her mother's generation, *chemwali* again, (or *aphwanga*, i.e. "younger sister"), in her own generation. The men, on the other hand, are Milanzis except in the latest generation of boys and unmarried youths. In Saima it works the opposite way: the women are all Milanzis, the men Mwales—except for Abena II's boy cousins who as Milanzis stay at their home until they marry Abena and her "sisters" and come to live at Mpoto.

587 There is at Saima an example of one old
603 custom which shows how the Nyanja do in their minds identify members of the alternate genera-
[595] tions. Abena's paternal grand-father has recently taken a classificatory daughter's daughter as a second wife to help his first wife, now old, with the arduous work of pounding and fetching water. I have been given several examples of this custom and told that it used often to happen for a man to take, not his biological grand-daughter, but a great niece, grand-child of one of his wife's sisters, as a "little wife". So it seemed natural for Abena's grand-father to marry this girl of Abena's generation, whom he had always called *alamu*, and even jokingly, *akazanga*. In the same way it is conceivable that Abena II might be taken as a "little wife" by one of her matenal "grandfathers", not Citete, Abena I's husband and her mother's father, but perhaps Nkwangwa, husband of Abena I's younger sister.

128 I have tried here to reconstruct the frame-
[582] work of a couple of typical Nyanja villages as I
619 believe them to have been bound together,
182 before European influences upset them two or three generations ago, by cross-cousin marriage. The villages are imaginary, but the names by which their fictitious inhabitants call each other are those still used to-day, and it is from the suggestion of these names that my sketch derives.
600 But if, in truth, village life used to be organized

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT7 Yao FT7

MARAVI, FR 4

M 602 621 BUT IF, IN TRUTH, VILLAGE LIFE USED TO BE ORGANIZED on a kinship basis, how far, you may ask, is it still so organized? Very largely. Cross-cousin marriage may be dying out and the bigger homesteads inclining to split up, but society is still fundamentally matrilineal and matilocal. One or two examples will show in what ways it is changing and in what ways it is fairly stable.

Y 592 Y [595] I. An old Yao friend of mine, X, who died three years ago was the grand-mother (*ambuye*) of Y, a village of 13 huts divided in two by a government-built road. Her father was a polygamist; her husband, (dead before I knew her), had had two other wives in nearby villages; when some 12 to 15 years ago she and her family, (*mbumba*), moved here, parts of it broke away, leaving her with a much smaller homestead than that in which she grew up. Besides the abandoned hut of my dead friend X, are those of a sister, two daughters and their husbands, six nieces (the daughters of three different sisters) and their husbands, a widowed step-brother, a step-son who has brought his wife to his home probably because her brother married his sister and so lives at Y, and a "boys' hut", (really a kitchen too), in which sleep or slept the bigger sons of one of her nieces.

M 592 N [590] [183] M [596] [601] II. A Nyanja friend, A, five or six years ago was allowed by his parents-in-law to take his wife back to his home village. Here, therefore, contrary to matrilocal custom, he lives with his own parents; but the rest of the homestead is matrilocal. When A built his hut here there were four other huts: his parents; those of a younger sister of his mother, (*mai wamng'ono*, "little mother"), and her husband; a girl cousin, this aunt's daughter and so called by him "sister" (*chemwali*), and his only married sister. It is still a small homestead, though another sister has since married and her husband built a hut here, and his young unmarried brothers have built their own "bachelors' hut", (*cinyamata*) where they sleep with one of his nephews; it can never be large, since his parents had eight sons, who as they grow up and marry go off to their wives' homes, and only two daughters to bring them sons-

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca.1940)1949 FT7 Yao FT7
[P.190A] MARAVI FR4

M 592 in-law in place of sons; and it is unlikely that many, indeed any, of his brothers will be able as A has done to overcome matrilocal prejudice. Many relatives, however, live close by, having broken apart from an originally large homestead; less than a mile off live an elder sister of A's mother, (*mai wamkulu*), with a married daughter, and perhaps a mile in the other direction live his mother's mother's brother and his mother's brother, (both *ambuye*), with their families of married daughters and granddaughters, unmarried sons and grandsons—a homestead of seven or more huts. Moreover, about fifteen miles to the East, near the shore of Lake Chilwa, is the original settlement of the Saima clan, to which A belongs through his mother and where, but for the peace brought by the Europeans, he and all his scattered relatives would probably still, he says, be living. Thus, though the average homestead to-day numbers, say, ten to fifteen huts, another part of the original family unit, (*mbumba*), is often to be found in a second small homestead not far off, and large compact villages of up to forty or fifty huts are still not uncommon. One chief's village I know has twenty-six huts, another beside the Shiré has thirty. Both these are matrilocal homesteads inhabited (if my informants were truthful) only by relatives and affines.

M 361 592

Y M 607 The examples cited show how strong is the kinship tie even under modern disruptive influences, and suggest how all-powerful it once was. I have called it a key to Nyanja and Yao society, for I believe their culture derives from it at every point: marriage, homecraft, agriculture, education, religion, were all bound up with the *mbumba*. But my aim here is not to describe the tree, merely to try and unearth its roots; and so, with one suggestion as to how these roots are entwined, I must end.

Y M 614 We find among the Nyanja and Yao vestiges of an exogamous matrilineal clan system which hint at a possible origin of cross-cousin marriage. Any Nyanja or Yao will tell you that he inherits from his mother membership of a certain clan,

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT7 Yao FT7
MARAVI FR4

(*mtundu*, or among the Ngoni and the Nyanja influenced by them, *mfumba*),—say the Mwales'. His father is of another clan—as likely as not the Milanzis'—for it is considered incest for two Mwales to marry. He will tell you that he addresses every Mwale he meets, even a stranger from a far village, as "brother, sister, father, mother", (*achimwene*, *chemwali*, *atate*, *amai*) according to age and sex, and feels obliged to offer them help and hospitality—although this feeling is in most parts dying out. The Milanzis of his own generation whom he meets he considers in the same way as his cousins, (*azuwani*), and treats, or used to treat, with the same friendly familiarity as his real cross-cousins at his father's home village.

This extension of brotherhood to one's mother's, and cousinship to one's father's, whole clan, suggests that the Nyanja clans (into which possibly the Yao married) may have grown each out of an extended family group, (*mbumba*), living or travelling together. Cross-cousin marriage would follow naturally on friendship between two such nearby groups, for after a few generations of intermarriage the groups would become so connected that a man born into the one and marrying into the other would in actuality be marrying his cross-cousin. Moreover there is a tradition, at least among the Nyanja of Zomba District, which bears out the evidence of the relationship terms. Old people tell how the earliest leaders of their tribe entered the country, each surrounded by his *mbumba*, and settled first here then there ; they explain how each group came to be named, and how lasting friendship arose between the Amwale under Chief Mpoto and the Amilanzi under Chief Saima, and similarly between the Apiri and the Ankhoma, the Ambewe and the Achanza. Whatever truth lies behind this tradition, it is certain that to-day, however scattered the clans may be and however generally the young men reject cross-cousin marriage, yet a Mwale still calls "cousin" every Milanzi he meets and treats their women as potential mates ; and the same holds good between the Phiri and Nkhoma, Mbewe and Chanza clans.